

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
For the Montana National Register of Historic Places Program and State Antiquities Database

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
PO Box 201202, 1410 8th Ave
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Property Address: **1536 Meadowlark Drive**

Historic Address (if applicable): **NA**

City/Town: **Great Falls**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Cascade**

Historic Name: **Country Club Towers**

Original Owner(s): **George Shanley, et. al.**

Current Ownership ☒ Private ☐ Public

Current Property Name: **County Club Towers**

Owner(s): **Various**

Owner Address: **1536 Meadowlark Drive
Great Falls, MT**

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **20N** Range: **3E**

NW ¼ SW ¼ NW ¼ of Section: **14**

Lot(s): **16-17**

Block(s): **2**

Addition: **Country Club Addition** Year of Addition:
Unknown

USGS Quad Name: **Southwest Great Falls** Year: **1965**
updated 1994

Historic Use: **Condominiums**

Current Use: **Condominiums**

Construction Date: **1955-56** ☐ Estimated ☒ Actual

☒ Original Location ☐ Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov/topofinder2

☐ NAD 27 ☒ NAD 83 (preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **475464** Northing: **5259685**
Geocode: 3015 14204 26000
Parcel 0006262000

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Date of this document: **May 26, 2010**

Form Prepared by: **Diana J. Painter, PhD**

Address: **3518 N. C Street, Spokane, WA 99205**

Daytime Phone: **(707) 364-0697**

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: ☒ yes ☐ no

Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Date: 11/16/2010

Evaluator: Kate Hampton

Comments:

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 2

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

X See Additional Information Page

Architectural Style: **Modern** If Other, specify: **International Style**
Property Type: **Residential** Specific Property Type: **Apartment tower**

Architect: **George H. Shanley** Architectural Firm/City/State: **George H. Shanley/Frank B. Shanley, Architects, Great Falls**

Builder/Contractor: **Pappin Construction Co.** Company/City/State: **Great Falls, MT**

Source of Information: **Newspaper**

Location and setting. Country Club Towers is an eleven-story building with a rectangular plan and a flat roof with a mechanical penthouse. It is located at 1536 Meadowlark Drive, west of the Missouri River and south of the Park River. The building is sited on the north side of Meadowlark Drive, a residential suburban street that terminates at the Meadowlark Country Club. This street is populated by mid-century, single family homes between the tower and the country club to the east. To the south of the building is multi-family development. Along Alder Drive to the south and Fox Farm Road and 6th Street SW, to the southwest is suburban, auto-oriented, commercial development.

The high-rise was developed at the northwest edge of the Meadowlark Country Club golf course in suburban Great Falls. Although it overlooks the golf course and there is a view corridor from the tower to the golf course, it appears to be largely separated from the golf course by single family development. Historically it was separated from the Park River by Country Club Blvd. Today Country Club Blvd. (also seen as I-15/200/10th Ave. South) forms a formidable barrier between the tower and the river and open space to the north. It appears that the commercial area at the intersection of 10th Ave. South and Farm Fox Road have been auto-oriented since the area was developed. The Country Club Motel, with its iconic golf club sign, was located in the southeast quadrant of this intersection as recently as 1995. Today this location is occupied by other commercial use.

Materials. The Country Club Towers is a reinforced concrete building with a stucco finish. It has a concrete foundation and a built-up roof. The community room at the top of the building appears to be wood frame, with deep, overhanging eaves. Additional materials on the building include aluminum-frame windows, metal sunshades, polished granite tiles at the main entrance, and roll-up metal doors at the garages.

Massing and design. The eleven-story Country Club Towers features a slightly larger volume on the north side of the high-rise, and a slightly smaller volume on the south. A sunshade wraps around the southeast corner of the building at each level. A large room that appears to be a community facility is located at the top level on the north side of the building. It is glazed on three sides with vertically-oriented, one-over-two-light, ganged windows, and covered by deep eaves. The central bay of the building, which is just left of the main entry, has floor-to-ceiling, six-light windows. Three-part windows with a large, slightly vertically-oriented, central light flanked by two narrow, operable lights are typical of the residential units. These are framed in anodized aluminum.

East (southeast) façade. The main, east (southeast) entry façade faces onto Meadowlark Drive. Historically there were two apartments per floor, one on the north (right) and one on the south (left) (this appears to be the case today as well). There are three window bays on the right, each composed of three-part windows, and two, three-part window bays on the left. The full-height window bays that mark the stairway are located to the left of center. The three southerly bays are covered by a sunshade that is composed of an open frame with angled slats on the interior.

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 3

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

At the ground floor is the main entry to the building, which is located under a flat canopy supported by thin metal posts. The entry is composed of double, aluminum-frame doors with full-height glass with narrow sidelights and three lights in the transom window above. It is surrounded by polished granite tiles. To the right of the entry the canopy continues to a pedestrian door to the garage to the north. This door has one light in the upper portion. The garage is one story, with an overhead door with three small lights that faces east, toward Meadowlark Drive.

To the left of the entry is an exit door for the stair tower. This is accessed via three shallow, concrete steps with a metal rail. An enclosure for a piece of equipment here has brick cladding.

South (southwest) façade. There are two window bays on the south side of the building, separated by a solid wall. The window on the east (right) is covered by the window shade. Each floor is identical.

Visible on the west side of the building is an entry to the garage, which is one story above grade and wraps around the west and north sides of the building. The entry to the garage is in the center of this facade. It consists of an overhead door with three narrow, horizontally-oriented slights. To the right of this entry is a pedestrian door with a single light in the upper portion.

West (northwest) façade. The west (rear) façade of the building has four full-size windows and three smaller windows on each floor. The southerly units have two large windows and one small window; the northerly units have two large windows and two small windows. Historically the smaller windows represented bathrooms and kitchens. The one-story garage is located on the north side of this west façade. Visible at the top floor is the glazed community room for the building.

North (northeast) façade. On the north (northeast) façade are two window bays. Historically these bays opened onto the living and dining areas of the northerly units. At the ground level here is the one-story garage that wraps around the building in this location. An addition to the garage has been constructed at the northeast corner of the building. Visible at the top floor of the building is the community room, which has three paired windows to each side of a solid wall.

Landscape and site design. The grounds of the apartment building area informally landscaped with mature trees. The main entry drive to the garage is located on the south side of the building. There is a small surface parking lot here. The garage entry is at the rear (east) side of the building. Visible at the rear of the lot is a small commercial office building which faces onto Country Club Blvd. The north corner of the site is open, with landscaping. The adjacent property line to the north-northeast separates the tower from a single family home. In front of the building, on the east façade is a drop-off driveway that enters the site on the southeast corner and exits at the northeast corner. In front of the building, on the opposite side of the street, is a view corridor into the golf course.

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 4

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**

HISTORY OF PROPERTY

X See Additional Information Page

The building. An article announcing the planned construction of the Country Club Towers was published in the *Great Falls Tribune* on December 10, 1954. The building was declared the first of its type in the state, and was estimated to cost \$600,000. The building was planned by Country Club Towers, Inc., a consortium made up of George H. Shanley, the architect, as president; Julius Peters, vice president; and John Duncan, secretary. The apartments were planned from the beginning as owner-occupied units, or condominiums. The arrangement was described as providing "... the convenience and luxury of about a \$40,000 home for approximately \$30,000."

As envisioned, it consisted of 21 apartments: ten two-bedroom units; one one-bedroom unit; and the remainder three-bedroom units; plus a caretaker's apartment. It was described as follows: "Ultra-modern in design, the building will be of concrete and steel, thoroughly fireproof, and will offer the ultimate in living facilities." The building footprint was to be 90 feet by 41 feet, with two apartments on each floor, one at the north end and one at the south end. The top community space, now an enclosed room, was initially envisioned as a "community roof deck." The building had two elevators and a 25-car garage when built. Two-bedroom units were to cost \$30,000 and three-bedroom units were to cost \$31,000. The units were sold as raw space, to be finished by the individual owners. Services were to be provided for an estimated \$100 a month. Each individual owned their unit and also had a share of stock in the management corporation.

As initially built, the building site included the land on both sides of Meadowlark Drive from the highway to the golf course and was about 500 by 300 feet in size. Today a view corridor to the golf course is still maintained.

INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

X See Additional Information Page

"Apartment Building Contract Let," *Great Falls Tribune*, n.d.

Bowker, R. R., *American Architects Directory* (First edition). Bowker LLC/American Institute of Architects, 1956 (Second edition, 1962; Third edition, 1970).

"Country Club Being Sued For Nonpayment of Notes," *Great Fall Tribune*, November 1955.

"Country Club Towers Hearing May End Today," *Great Falls Tribune*, n.d.

"Country Club Towers Remodeling Restraint Case Hearing Begins," *Great Falls Tribune*, April 17, 1963.

"Country Club Towers Restraint Suit Is Taken Under Advisement," *Great Falls Tribune*, April 20, 1963.

"Local Group to Build Apartment Structure At Cost of \$600.00," *Great Falls Tribune*, December 10, 1954, p. 1.

McMillan, Myron A. (photographer), Sparling Hotel Historic American Buildings Survey, April 1988.

"Meadow Lark Country Club," <http://www.meadowlarkcc.net/> accessed May 2, 2010.

Mathews, Allan and Dagney Krigbaum, Missoula Downtown Historic District National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, June 2006.

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 5

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**

INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

Montana Architectural Drawings - Montana State University Digital Initiatives <http://arc.lib.montana.edu/architect/index.php> accessed March 2010.

"Tower Apartment Suit Defendants Ask \$150,000 in Counter Action, *Great Falls Tribune*, May 22, 1963.

"Tower Case Dismissal Is Denied," *Great Falls Tribune*, n.d.

"Tower Case Plaintiffs Are Sued for \$420,276.00" *Great Falls Tribune*, October 9, 1963.

"Tower Remodeling Described, Peters Testifies Purpose Unknown," *Great Falls Tribune*, April 18, 1963.

HISTORY OF PROPERTY

Eight of the units were pre-sold by 1955, which included the unit belonging to George Shanley and his wife, and his son and his wife. Difficulties apparently arose in selling the remainder of the units, however. The ownership arrangement, which is common now, may have been of concern to prospective buyers. The idea of living in a high-rise in a suburban area may also have been too unconventional for the residents of Great Falls at the time. By the early 1960s, there were still seven or eight (accounts differ) unsold units.

After Shanley's death in 1960 Julius C. Peters, who was an 'oil man' who later became involved in real estate, owned the controlling stock in the corporation that built the structure and the remaining unsold units. Peters became interested in selling the building. An interview with the owner of the Country Club Motel revealed that Peters had discussed using the building for a motel, a convalescent center, or "bachelor apartments." He concluded that he could convert the eight units to thirty-six motel rooms.

Peters found a prospective buyer in Jamie Ballard of Beverley Hills, California. Ballard stipulated, however, that the building be remodeled, redecorated, and furnished according to his specifications as a condition of the sale, which was set at \$500,000 or \$50,000 a unit. Without informing the existing residents Peters began removing the kitchens of the remaining unsold units in order to begin remodeling the building.

The existing owners, represented as the Country Club Management Corporation, filed a suit against the Country Club Tower Corporation. They wanted to prevent any alterations or changes to the original plan for the building. The owners felt that there was an "implied covenant" that the units would remain owner-occupied, luxury apartment units. One of the existing owners, Elizabeth Roberts, testified that, "A restriction in the deed to the apartment provided that a majority of the apartment owners would have to consent before one owner could sell or sublease his apartment." To make matters more complex, Peters and his cohorts owned one-half of the shares in the Country Club Towers Management Corporation, and the plaintiffs owned the other half of the twenty shares.

Peters and his cohorts sued for \$150,000 in lost value in the three individual units that they owned. In the course of the lawsuit Peters' sale fell through and he also sued the existing owners for \$420,276 in damages.

Research did not reveal the final decisions for these lawsuits, but it is likely that the owners prevailed, as the building is a condominium today with the individual units being held as single family units.

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 6

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**

HISTORY OF PROPERTY

The setting. The Meadow Lark Country Club, designed by George H. Shanley, was established in 1919. The building, which is located at the (east) end of Meadowlark Drive, was the impetus for the later development of the Country Club Addition, Country Club Motel, and Country Club Towers. Today the complex includes a pool house, a pool, an indoor tennis court, four outdoor tennis courts, and the golf course that Country Club Towers overlooks. Historically the country club was located at the confluence of the Missouri and Park Rivers. Today this setting is somewhat undermined by the dominance of I-15/200/10th Ave. South (historically Country Club Blvd.), which separates the property from the Park River.

The Country Club Addition is a planned suburban community. The entry to the area is occupied by large and small-scale suburban, auto-oriented, commercial development. Historically this was referred to as the "business district" of the Country Club addition. When the Country Club Towers was built, the newspaper announced that, "The proposed building will be the tallest in Great Falls, and is another step in the rapid development of the city's new Country Club Addition, a residential area that has been flourishing in recent years." ("Local Group . . ." 1954).

The Country Club Towers building was progressive and unique for its time in many ways. It was the first proposed condominium project in Great Falls, a property type that was referred to as an owner-occupied or 'cooperative' or 'community' apartment building at the time. It was the tallest building in Great Falls when constructed. And it was an urban building type in a suburban setting. The concept of a 'tower in a park' residential building was one that was popularized during the modern movement, and seen in renderings of cities from Paris to, in this case, Great Falls, Montana. In this instance, this urban concept is paired with the suburban model of residential development around a golf course.

The architects. The Country Club Towers was designed by George H. Shanley and his son Frank B. Shanley. George H. Shanley, perhaps Great Falls' most prominent architect, was born in 1875 in Burlington, Vermont and attended the University of Vermont. After graduation he worked for various architects in Duluth, Minnesota. In 1898 he came west to help his father build St. Mary's Cathedral in Fargo, North Dakota (*Matthews, 2006, Section 8:14*). He also helped his father build a barn near Glacier Park (*McMillan, 1988:2*).

In early years Shanley worked in Kalispell for the self-named firm of Gibson and Shanley. In 1900 he moved to Butte, where he was associated with the firm of Shanley, Wilson and Hugenin. He moved to Great Falls in 1907 and again formed his own firm. He continued to collaborate with others however. In 1915 he worked with the renowned Spokane architectural firm of Cutter & Malmgren on a country house in West Glacier for Mrs. John G. Morony. Shanley also collaborated with Ralph Adams, a structural engineer from Spokane, on the design of the 1920 Tenth Street Bridge, which facilitated the development of this area of Great Falls.

The following list of Great Falls buildings designed by Shanley is taken in part from a HABS survey of the Sparling Hotel, designed by Shanley in 1905: Independent Telephone building; Washington School; State Deaf and Blind School; Rainbow Hotel; First National Bank; the new Park Hotel; Liberty Theatre; Johnson Hotel; Strain Building; Falls Hotel; Buttrey Building; Rocky Mountain Fire Insurance Building; Cascade County Jail; Forest's Garage; Barber-Lydiard Building; Ursuline Academy; St. Thomas Home; Columbus Hospital; Central High School; First Avenue North Bridge; Tenth Street Bridge; the Meadow Lark Country Club clubhouse; Country Club Towers; State Fairgrounds buildings; Dunn-Brown Block; the YMCA; the Blackstone Apartments with Henry Hall Johnson; and the Civic Center with Johannes Van Teylingen. The Great Falls Automatic Telephone Company (the Independent Telephone Building) was reportedly the first reinforced concrete building in Great Falls.

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

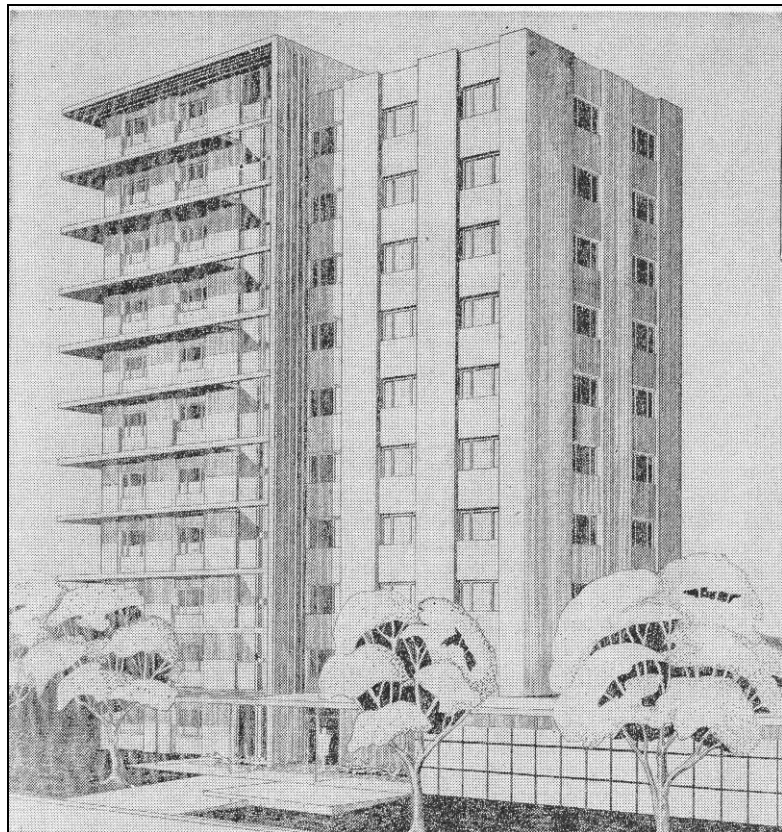
Site Number: **24 CA 1529**

HISTORY OF PROPERTY

Shanley also designed buildings throughout Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming. Representative examples include: First National Bank and Federal Reserve Bank buildings and the State Highway Department building in Helena; the Finlen Hotel, the Immaculate Conception School and Convent, and the main pavilion at Columbia Gardens in Butte; and the Baxter Hotel in Bozeman and several buildings on the Montana State University campus. He designed the Army Winter Training Camp at Yellowstone National Park. He also designed several Catholic Churches, many schools and numerous banks.

Shanley was active in Democratic Party politics. He was elected to the Montana House of Representatives in the fall of 1936, where he served one term. He was appointed to the State Board of Architectural Examiners in 1918 and served many years as its president. He was also a member and president of the City of Great Falls Planning Board for many years (*McMillen, 1988:2*). He married about 1906 and had four children. His son Frank was a business partner, and son Boland (Bo) supervised construction for the firm. Shanley died on November 4, 1960.

Frank B. Shanley was born in Great Falls on December 11, 1910 and attended Montana State College. He joined his father's firm in 1932, working as a draftsman until 1946. When Frank became a partner the firm was known as George H. and Frank B. Shanley, Architects. Some time after his father's death Frederick O. Anderson joined the firm. The firm was then known as Shanley, Shanley & Anderson.



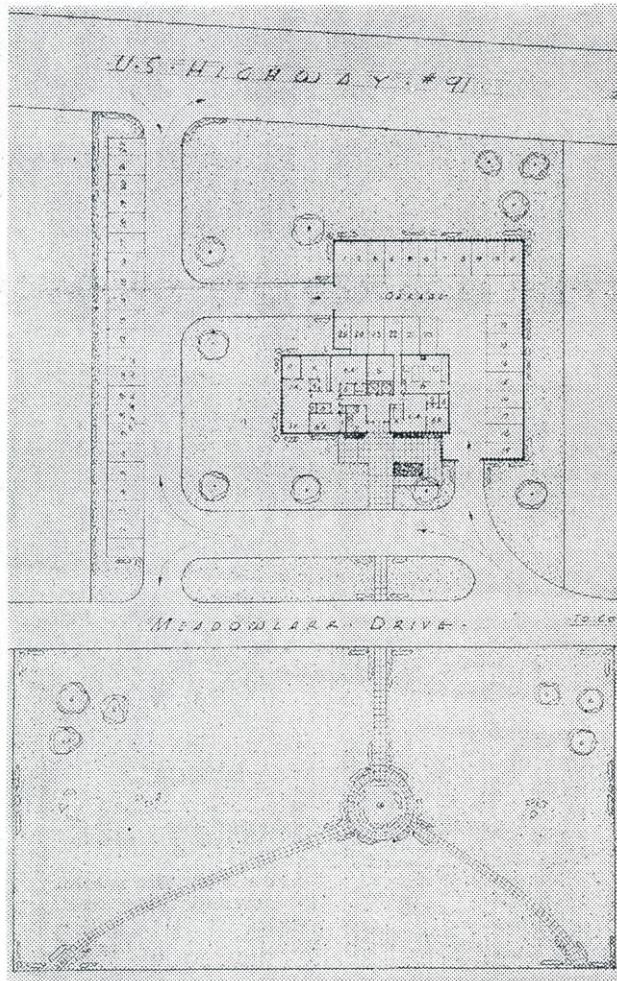
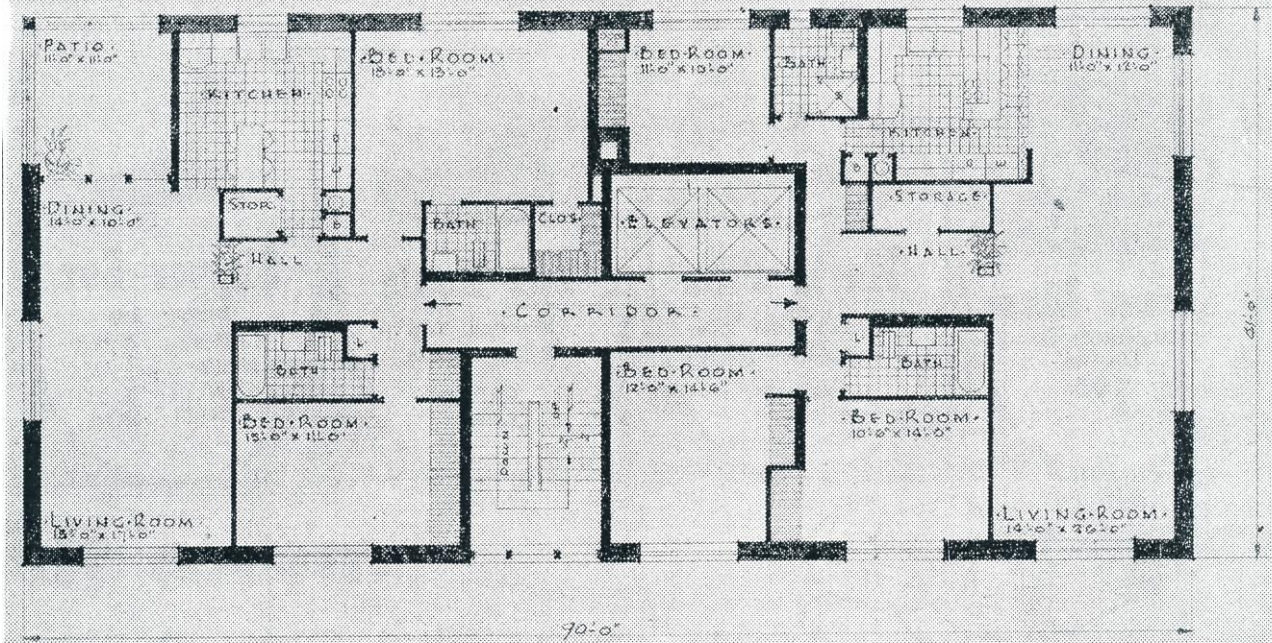
1954 rendering of Country Club Tower

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 8

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**



♦ **TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN AND PLOT OF APARTMENT SITE**—A typical plan of one floor of the proposed \$600,000 apartment building in the Country Club addition is shown above. The 11-story owner-occupancy project is being sponsored by Country Club Towers, Inc., and will be the ultimate in modern design and facilities. Each floor will include a two and a three-bedroom apartment, except the first and eleventh, which will have one apartment each. The building will be 90 by 41 feet and of steel and concrete, with an attached 25-stall garage. It will be located about 1,000 feet west of the Meadow Lark Country club and adjacent to the highway to Gore hill. A plot plan of the apartment site is shown at left. The building will face the golf course and the area in front of the structure will be developed as part of the site, providing an unobstructed view of the course. Architects for the structure are George and Frank Shanley.

4

Floor plan as published in 1954

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 9

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date:

NRHP Eligibility: ☒ Yes ☐ No ☒ Individually ☐ Contributing to Historic District ☐ Noncontributing to Historic District

NRHP Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Area of Significance: **Architecture** Period of Significance: **1955**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

☐ See Additional Information Page

Country Club Towers is significant as an excellent example of a Modern residential high-rise that retains very good integrity. It was also a pioneering building type in Great Falls, for both its form and management as an early (possibly the first) condominium. The building's modern features include its form, the horizontally-oriented windows, the window wall that marks the central bay and stair tower, and the sunshade that covers portions of the south and east facades. That the building appears as 'stylish' as it no doubt did when first built is a testament to its designer George Shanley.

INTEGRITY

☐ See Additional Information Page

The building retains very good integrity. Some minor changes have been made, such as new entry doors and garage doors, but the overall design appears to be consistent with the rendering published in 1955. (Research did not reveal whether the community room was constructed at the time, or enclosed later).

The building retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. It also retains integrity of setting. While some of the buildings around the tower have changed, the uses have not and the scale of development also appears to be relatively consistent.

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**



Description: **North and east facades**



Description: **East (front) facade**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**



Description: **North (side) façade with garage in foreground; south (side) facade**



Description: **West (rear) facade**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**



Description: **Entry detail, east facade**



Description: **Window and sunshade detail, typical**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **Country Club Towers**

Site Number: **24 CA 1529**



Description: **Neighborhood context; tower viewed from northeast, on Meadowlark Drive**



Description: **West garage, viewed from south**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
SITE MAP

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Site Number: **24 CA 1529**



MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

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